

# Lewis & Clark in Montana

## Interpretive Sign Strategy



A Lasting Legacy



A work commissioned by the  
Montana Governor's Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission  
and the Montana Tourism and Recreation Initiative

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A WORK COMMISSIONED BY THE

MONTANA GOVERNOR'S LEWIS AND CLARK BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION  
AND  
THE MONTANA TOURISM AND RECREATION INITIATIVE

2000

## Montana Tourism & Recreation Initiative Members

### State

Montana Governor's Office  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
Montana Department of Commerce  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Montana Department of Transportation  
Montana Heritage Preservation & Development Commission  
Montana Historical Society  
Montana Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission  
Tourism Advisory Council  
University of Montana - Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research  
Montana State University Extension Service

### Federal

Bureau of Land Management  
Bureau of Reclamation  
National Park Service  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
U.S.D.A. Forest Service

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### Private Partners

Montana Power Company

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## Introduction: Tracing the story across the landscape

*"I had scarcely ascended the hills before I discovered to my left at a distance of a mile an assemblage of about 30 horses, I halted and used my spy glass by the help of which I discovered several indians on the top of an eminence who appeared to be looking down toward the river I presumed at Drewer... this was a very unpleasant sight, however I resolved to make the best of our situation and to approach them in a friendly manner... about this time they discovered us and appeared to run about in a very confused manner as if much allarmed..."*

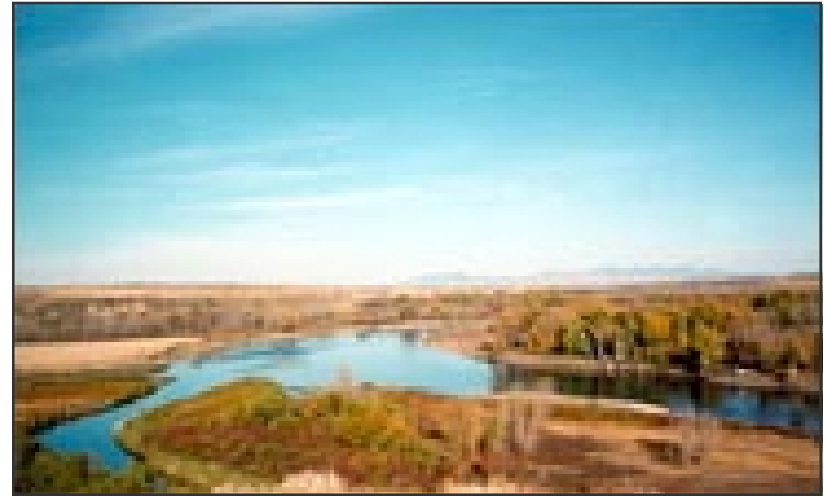


photo of Marias River...

When Captain Lewis climbed over the bluffs of the Marias River Canyon on July 26, 1806, he was stunned to see a group of people — young Piegan warriors — looking down at the rest of his party below. The Indians were equally startled when they looked behind them and saw the figure of Lewis approaching with American flag flying. The Corps of Discovery was a band of daring adventurers mapping the newly expanded nation, so-journers in a world they passed through but little understood.

What a great story! A tiny troop of explorers traveling through a vast and foreign countryside, applying their best technology and unbelievable grit to assess and traverse a land they could barely comprehend. The adventures of Lewis & Clark and their encounters in Indian country are retold over and over — in the landscape, in the journals, in the oral histories of the Native people whose ancestors they met, and in the imaginations of all who love stories of the West.

As Montana anticipates the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, public agencies, communities and private organizations eagerly prepare for visitors to Montana. What should we be doing? Are we starting early enough? Who should be responsible for what? Where do we need to coordinate?

How can we encourage community participation and creativity, and yet produce a cohesive statewide interpretive program for the thousands of visitors who will stream to Montana for the Bicentennial commemoration events during 2005 and 2006 and beyond?

### Creating a unified strategy

The Interpretive Sign Strategy proposes a unified structure, style and look for interpretive signs along Lewis and Clark trails, while encouraging creativity and individuality appropriate to each site and each different story.

The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission and the Montana Tourism and Recreation Initiative (MTRI), a coalition of 18 federal and state agencies in Montana, with additional participation from the Montana Power Company, have joined forces to maximize efficiency and reduce duplication as different agencies and communities prepare for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. The Montana Lewis and Clark Interpretive Sign Strategy is one result of these efforts.

Though Montanans are creating many kinds of programs, events and promotional efforts for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, the Strategy primarily focuses on signage. It also provides information on building vista houses, and other travel information.

Interpretive signs have long been a popular source of information and inspiration along

Montana highways, backroads and trails. People like the existing signs, and they want more: signs in the right places, signs that look good, and signs that tell interesting stories. But people also don't want to see the landscape of Montana cluttered with too many signs or signs that contain insensitive stereotypes and historical errors. Good planning is essential.

This Interpretive Sign Strategy along with the Appendices contains almost 400 pages of information and detailed design guidelines that will help communities, organizations and agencies produce high-quality interpretation along the Lewis and Clark trails that illuminate the importance of each special site, and that fits within a cohesive overall plan for Montana's Lewis and Clark interpretation. The Design guidelines will help build a statewide network of signs and structures that meet these objectives:

- are consistent enough to be identifiable by visitors
- are visually pleasing
- place Lewis and Clark in a bigger, more complex context
- emphasize natural settings
- reinforce cultural (Native American) history

They also are helpful to those renewing or refurbishing existing signs.

The Interpretive Sign Strategy package comes in two parts: the Interpretive Sign Strategy, and a series of Appendices. Both are available in print and on CD-ROM. The Interpretive Sign Strategy provides an overview of how to create effective interpretive signage with references to the Appendices that contain more detailed information on each topic.

### Why follow the Interpretive Strategy?

If you and your community, organization or agency are planning to revise, reconstruct or create new interpretive signs along the Lewis and Clark trail in Montana, this Interpretive Strategy can help. By following these recommendations, you can be a part of building a statewide interpretive legacy for generations to come. Also, if your project complies with these formats, and if it qualifies, it may be eligible for some funding support. For more information about funding options, refer to the Compliance Guidelines on the last page in this Sign Strategy.

### Studying Montana's rich interpretive legacy

What kind of interpretive signs already exist in Montana? What do they look like, what do they say, and what do people like and not like about them?

The Interpretive Strategy team recruited Heritage Design, a Washington-based group of interpretive specialists, to look at all the existing interpretative signs across the state and develop a Montana Lewis and Clark Interpretive Sign Strategy. The Heritage Design folks drove more than 16,000 miles to look at as many Lewis and Clark-related signs as they could, and assessed what they saw. They looked for gaps in the Lewis and Clark story needing to be told and came up with a list of suggested themes you might consider as you create your sign.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

A complete report of the inventory of Montana's interpretive signs, including locations, type of sign and content, appears in Appendix II, pages 50 through 174.

When the team drove across Montana, they found a rich system of interpretive signs that provide a good foundation on which to build. Many sites are well managed and in good repair, but many of them could use some maintenance work. The team recommended that sign sponsors place a high priority on performing needed maintenance of existing interpretive signs and facilities by 2003.

Montana enjoys a broad mix of interpretive signs, monuments, wayside exhibits and historic markers. You can find bronze plaques mounted on stone from the 1920s, and the simple location markers that the U.S. Forest Service installed along the expedition trail in the 1930s. Most common along highways — the hallmark of interpretation in Montana — are the text panels carved into timber and hung from beams mounted on rockwork bases, designed by Robert Fletcher in the 1930s. Rest stops, pullouts and trailhead signs all present a varied field of physical designs emphasizing different parts of the Lewis and Clark story.

In some places, the story unfolds in a way that might have been romantic in the early 20th Century, but now may seem culturally

insensitive. In other places, the Lewis and Clark theme doesn't relate well to the landscape, or the text leaves holes in the story that might perplex travelers. If you want to know how the signs in your area were evaluated, and how new signs might solve some specific problems, you will find the Inventory section (Appendix II ) quite interesting.

The statewide interpretive story of Lewis and Clark is a valuable resource to treasure and maintain. The Bicentennial presents a great opportunity for local communities, organizations and agencies to work together to improve and add to Montana's historical legacy.



### How can interpretation be improved?

The Heritage Design team identified some specific areas where they recommended improvements or expansion to Montana's Lewis and Clark interpretation. Please keep these suggestions in mind as you plan your interpretive project:

#### Create more interpretation from the Indian point of view.

While existing signs do a good job of pointing out where the Lewis and Clark Expedition camped and where they said or did interesting things, the rich heritage of Montana Indian tribes, their cultures, interactions with Lewis and Clark and subsequent history is not told in many places. Tribes should be involved in every stage of planning and design. Interpretation should include the Indian perspective, and be developed by Indian people, wherever possible.

#### Emphasize expansive landscapes that still look like they did when Lewis and Clark saw them.

Among Montana's truly unique resources are those landscapes rich in botanical and wildlife populations that remain much as they were 200 years ago. These sites are not interpreted fully in many areas, and they offer great opportunities to tie Lewis and Clark history together with contemporary natural resource conservation.

New signs might incorporate journal entries, tribal oral histories and contemporary science to create better understanding of how these landscapes continue to evolve. Together, these sites would constitute a Montana natural history outdoor museum stretching across the state.

#### Make an effort to coordinate Lewis and Clark interpretation with those in surrounding areas.

How can your project tie in, enhance, or expand the interpretation of your whole area? Currently, each public land agency has its own style of sign design and base, with content that frequently overlaps. New signs should be designed to provide some visual consistency, and to present a cohesive story to people driving across the state.

### Orient the traveler in the landscape.

Maps, illustrations, photographs and drawings help visitors get a better idea of where they are in relation to Lewis and Clark's footsteps, or what part of their journey is represented. Maps help characterize the landscape and connect the visitor to the

#### THE GOAL OF THIS STRATEGY:

To create a uniquely Montana approach and look that will leave a lasting legacy in the interpretation of the Lewis and Clark story.

**The approach:** a broader landscape-oriented approach to interpretation incorporating both natural and cultural themes related to the Lewis and Clark story.

**The Look:** A 1930s color scheme and font style for signage set in "timeless" rustic, Federalist style, stone and timber structures.

**The Legacy:** preservation and emphasis of the landscape through interpretations which enhance the setting and showcase segments of preserved landscape.

land and the story. Many existing signs do not use visual tools enough.

These are simple ways to improve and refine Montana's interpretive tradition. All it takes is planning, energy, imagination and commitment. The same ingredients, in fact, that were required of Lewis and Clark.

In the next few pages, we'll walk through the process of developing your sign concept, identifying the best storyline for your site, telling the story, incorporating the design elements that will give it a unified, striking look, and getting your signs produced and constructed. We'll provide guidelines for colors, design elements, layout, and materials, and we'll present standards for placement of your interpretive signs in the landscape to be most responsive to the way people travel and experience the story. The Interpretive Sign Strategy also provides additional references, contacts, specific pages to refer to in the Appendices, and where to go for help when you get stuck.

## **Introduction: Tracing the Landscape**

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## Complying with the Strategy

With statewide use of this Interpretive Sign Strategy, Montana hopes to build a lasting legacy that will weave the Lewis and Clark threads together across our state. The following requirements are designed to allow enough flexibility for each individual story, while ensuring quality control for product excellence and visual consistency.

### Interpretive Strategy Compliance Requirements

In order to ensure that your interpretive site complies with the state strategy, at least one interpretive sign must include the following design elements:

- Use of the colored header/banner across the top of the sign  
The regional identifier in placement specified
- Use of one of the three color combination choices recommended with the main title placed in the header as specified
- L&C logo placed in the recommended position in the upper right hand corner

- Documented landowner/land management review and approval as appropriate
- Use of agency or other credit logos placed at the bottom of sign as appropriate

Effective public interpretation requires careful choice of theme and wording. The Montana Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission wants to encourage and promote interpretive projects that portray accurate and inclusive messages regarding the complete picture of Lewis and Clark in Montana. To facilitate achieving that goal, all interpretive signage produced with funding that includes money provided by the Montana Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission will be subject to design and content review prior to manufacture. The Montana Historical Society staff is ready to advise and/or assist you in selecting themes and stories you wish to tell, in researching your selections and/or in writing your interpretive text. If grant applicants wish to pursue researching and writing their interpretive

material independently, we recommend that they discuss their themes/story choices with MHS staff before they begin. Final interpretive material must be submitted for approval to ensure accuracy of information, effective presentation and correct grammatical usage.

### Special Requests for Compliance:

If an applicant is proposing a signage design that does not include the required elements as outlined in these Compliance Requirements (for example, a well designed sign that preceded the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Strategy), the applicant is asked to submit a written “request for approval” outlining why the proposed sign(s) should be viewed as “In-Compliance.” Special requests for compliance will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis.



# Chapter One: Project Planning

*“History illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance  
in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.”*

— Cicero

## Place or story first?

Every good interpretive project begins with a place that has a story. Most interpretive projects begin with an available place to install a sign or marker — perhaps you already know where your interpretive project will be set. The bigger challenge will probably be deciding which story to tell about the place you have selected, and how to tell it in a way that brings your story alive to visitors. Here are the ingredients you’ll need:

- a place that has a story
- a good story to tell
- an appropriate venue (interpretive sign marker, vista house, etc.)
- a great design
- an appropriate spot for the sign
- a good team to put it all together

The team you will need probably includes a writer, a graphic designer, someone to install the finished product, a small group of people to contribute help and ideas, and a team leader to administer the project. Many projects involve an illustrator, historian, landscape architect and civil engineer. There are people and agencies across the state who can give you invaluable help, guidance, references and information, so be sure to include them in your project. A list of people you can contact appears on page 39.

You should place new interpretive signs where they’ll be accessible and make sense to people traveling through the landscape. You may have to remove or relocate an existing sign if it is not effective in its present setting, or if it duplicates a part of the story told elsewhere.

## Whom are you trying to reach?

Plan for four different types of traveler:

- Interstate travelers
- Excursion travelers
- Lewis and Clark enthusiasts
- Recreational visitors


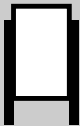


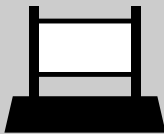


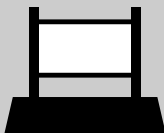

### WHOM SHOULD YOU ASK?

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has developed guidelines to ensure safe access and use of interpretive sites along MDT right-of-ways (highways, interstates and rest areas). They also may have regulations governing where you can and can’t erect signs. For information regarding the MDT’s guidelines, contact the Historical Highway Marker Coordinator at (406) 444-6258.



Match the interpretation to the site

The first step in deciding which type of sign to use is to ask, “Who is the sign addressing, and what information do they need to know?” There are many types of signs, and each serves a different purpose. The site you have chosen — a rest stop, a roadside pullout, a trailhead — will determine what kind of sign you should put up.

	Interpretive Signs	Orientation Signs	Introduction Signs	Markers	Entrance Signs
INTERSTATE					
HIGHWAY					
VISTA HOUSE					
RECREATION/BACK COUNTRY					

### Along Interstates

Along the Interstate, travelers' only opportunities to stop and read interpretive signs are at rest stops or at certain exits. Each interpretive installation along the Interstate should be designed and written as though it were the only Lewis and Clark interpretation that might be seen by any particular traveler.

At rest stops, interpretive installations should generally be placed separate from the restrooms and trash cans, should be attractively landscaped, and should draw visitors to stretch their legs and get a sense of the scenery. Structures should be built of native materials and landscaped with indigenous vegetation, providing a sense of place and reflecting the geography of the area.

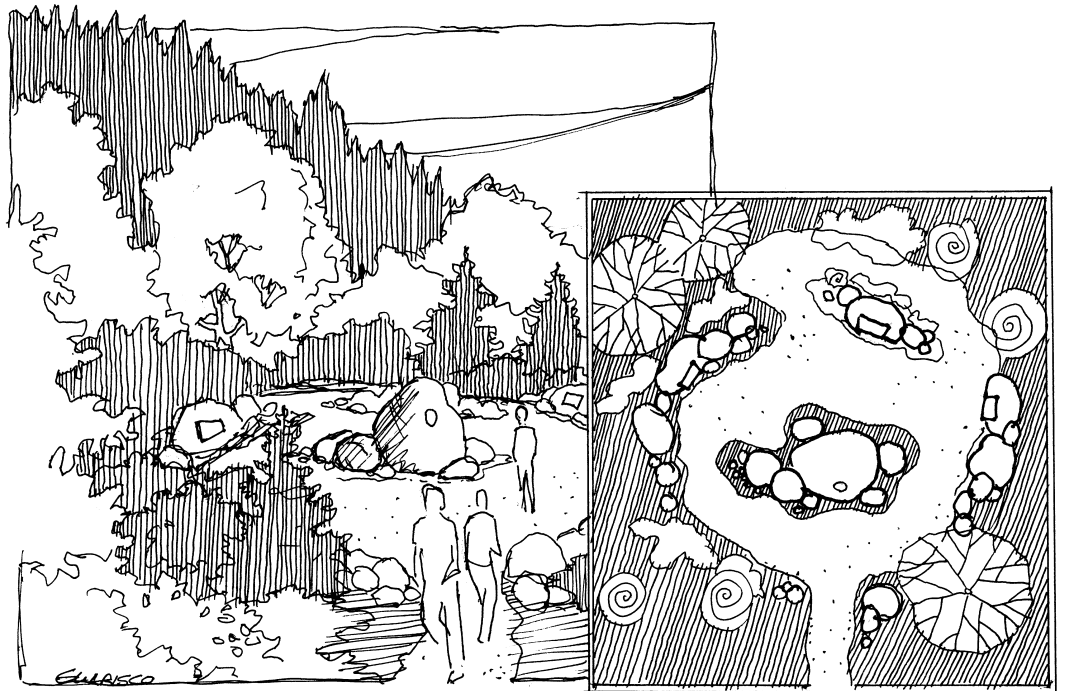
Interstate exits leading to other highways and byways can be great locations for interpretive installations. Here, you might build a simple pullout with accompanying interpretive installation that includes maps and other types of signs to inform travelers of byways, backroads, vista houses and recreational opportunities in the area.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For a list of good locations for Interstate interpretation, see Appendix IV , page 188.

#### ■ Elements of signs along Interstates are:

- Marker set into boulder to serve as the introduction to the site.
- Orientation Sign
- Interpretive Sign(s)
- Walkway leading to landscaped interpretive area.
- Boulder placement as backdrop and sign mounts
- Natural vegetation landscape





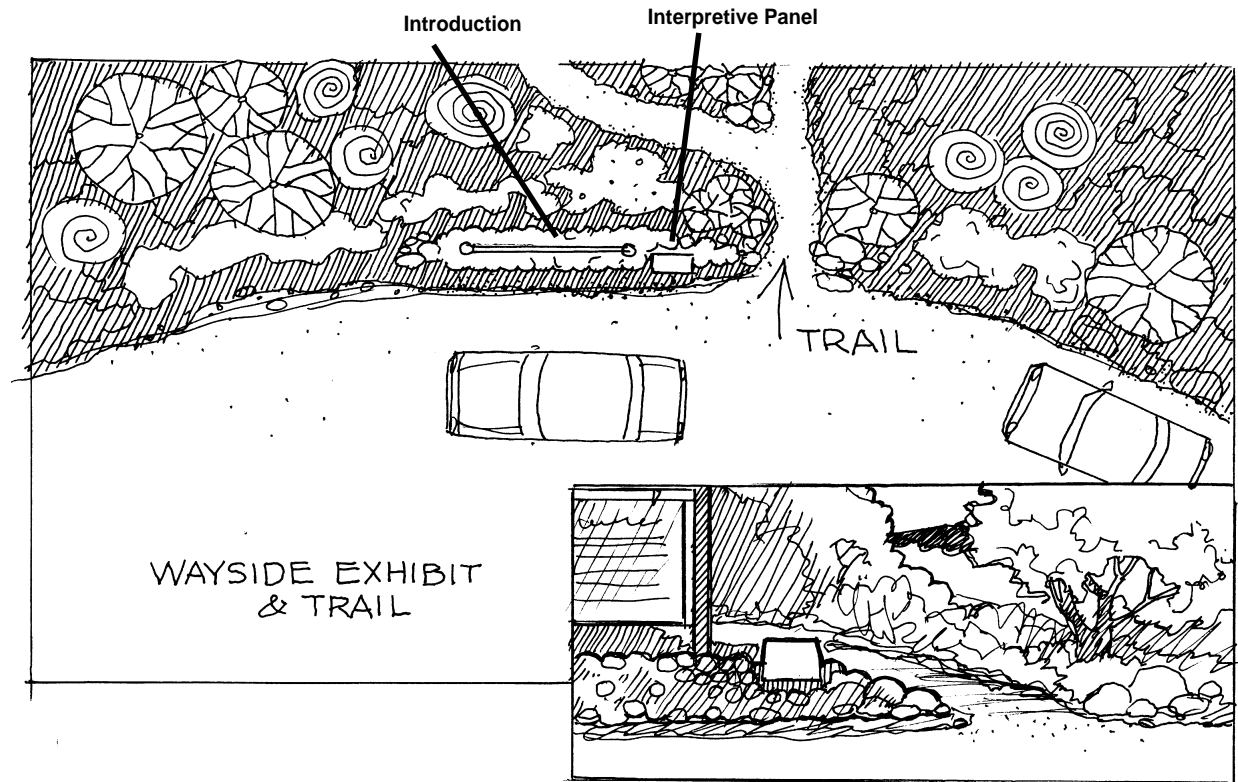
### Beside the highway

People travel along highways at a more leisurely pace than along Interstates. Highways offer more opportunities for travelers to get out, follow trails, and enjoy interpretive installations in greater depth than the Interstate offers.

■ A good highway interpretation site includes four elements:

- An attractive, interesting setting
- Safe access off and on the roadway and parking area for several vehicles
- Approach Signs and Introduction panel
- At least one focal roadside interpretive installation set in a rustic structure of stone or timber & landscaped with local vegetation
- A walking trail or other opportunity to experience the landscape

Much of Montana's highway interpretation has a unique 1930s flavor that should be preserved as part of the historic legacy of Montana. Several of these interpretive signs could be moved farther off the highway and combined with fishing access sites or trailheads. Many also could be



enhanced with location information and an expanded story line.

What happened here during the Lewis and Clark expedition? How can weaving the Lewis and Clark story into the interpretive content enhance visitors' experience of this place?

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For a list of good locations for highway interpretation, see Appendix IV, page 189.

### Vista houses

Vista houses are open-air shelters offering windows to view a landscape that still looks the way it did when Lewis and Clark saw it. Vista houses contain interpretive signs with information appropriate to the landscape, and a bench inviting the visitor to rest and reflect.

#### ■ Elements of a good vista house are:

- Entrance sign
- Parking for several vehicles
- Pathway leading to the structure
- Structure built with local rock and timbers
- Flagstone floor inside
- Artistic detail in metal, iron and rock
- Interpretive signage
- Landscape identifier
- A bench inside the structure
- Landscaped with local, native vegetation

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For a list of good locations for vista houses, see Appendix IV, page 190.

The vastness of the Montana landscape makes it uniquely appropriate for the placement of these ‘windows’ into the world where Lewis and Clark traveled. Rustic yet elegant, these structures are a part of the landscape, designed to be a unique reflection of the land from which they draw their inspiration. Vista houses also create a great opportunity for local service groups, vocational training classes and craftsmen to work together on a community project that will be a part of Montana’s interpretive heritage.



### Backroads

Some segments of the Lewis and Clark trail can only be reached by primitive or dirt roads. Here, the landscape is the focus and the journey as important as the stops. Interpretation is low key and unobtrusive, allowing travelers their own discovery experience.

Be sure to check with the appropriate road maintenance, landowner and/or land management agency in the early stages of your planning.

#### ■ Good backroad interpretation includes three elements:

- An introduction panel placed after the turnoff from the paved road
- Caution signs with information about safe use of road
- Markers (can be simple metal plaques mounted on rock) identifying the feature or event you want to highlight here

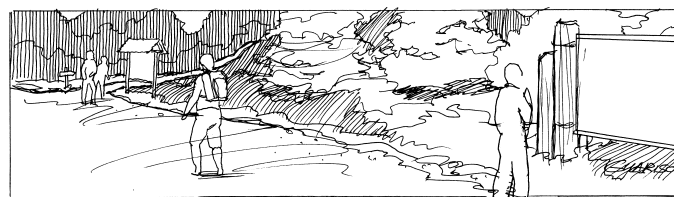


#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For a list of good locations for backroad interpretation, see Appendix IV , page 191.

### Recreation sites

Rivers, horse trails, hiking paths and other undeveloped landscapes will be increasingly rare treasures in Montana in this century. Well-designed, unobtrusive interpretation that identifies and helps preserve these settings and routes will be another valuable and lasting legacy to Montana and the future of tourism in the state.



#### ■ If you want to install interpretation at recreational sites or along trails, think about these five things:

- Adequate parking
- Introduction Panel should be visible from parking area
- Recreation or trailhead information should be set at a distance from Introduction Panel
- Use markers (metal plaques mounted on rock) as a less obtrusive way to identify a place
- Get permission from the appropriate road maintenance, landowner and/or land management agency in the early stages of your planning.

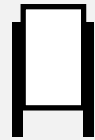
#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For a list of good locations for recreation site interpretation, see Appendix IV, page 192.

### What type of sign?

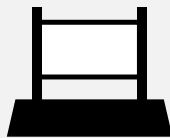
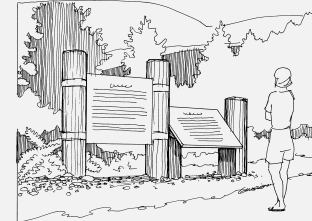
The site will determine the best type of sign to use. Information that is designed to be read from a vehicle is more effective if placed upright. Information designed to be read at leisure by people on foot is more effective if presented at an angle. Generally, orientation and introduction signs will be upright, and interpretive signs will be angled.

There are four basic types of signs in the interpretive family.



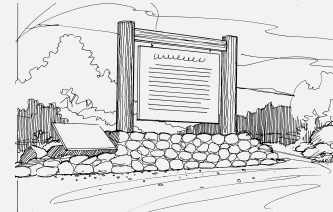
#### ORIENTATION SIGNS

**Orientation Signs** help a visitor locate themselves in the state, on the landscape, and in the Lewis and Clark story.



#### INTRODUCTION PANELS

**Introduction Panels** welcome visitors to a larger facility with a brief text describing the site and the name of the site.



#### MARKERS

**Markers** can introduce or simply identify a site and can be either a low impact site identifier or high profile identifier.



#### INTERPRETIVE PANEL

**Interpretive Signs** contain fully developed ideas with graphics and artwork to enhance the visitors experience.



## Chapter One: Project Planning

### Orientation Signs

Orientation signs help visitors locate themselves in the state, on the landscape, and in the Lewis and Clark story.

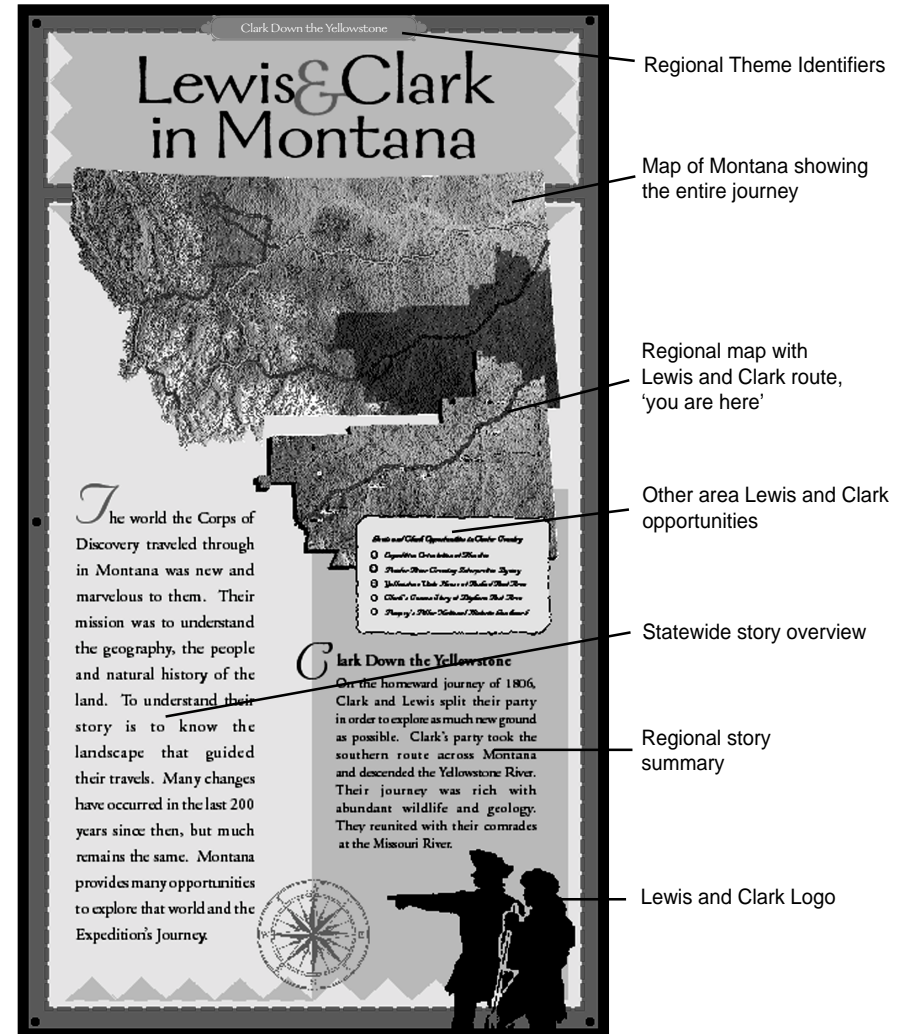
Orientation signs involve visitors in the landscape. Designed to be used at a rest stop, an orientation panel could be adapted to several uses and settings to orient the traveler in the landscape. This type of sign provides an overview of the story, and highlights other opportunities or points of interest in the area. Orientation signs are best placed at Interstate rest stops, on highways, at Chamber of Commerce visitor centers, museums and ranger stations. They can also be produced as brochures or posters.

Orientation signs are appropriate in a location where they may be the only Lewis and Clark interpretation a traveler may see. They contain three levels of information:

- a statewide Expedition overview,
- regional landscape orientation featuring Lewis & Clark opportunities, and
- brief text addressing the Expedition's travels through the surrounding region.

#### ■ Elements of an Orientation Sign:

- Lewis and Clark in Montana logo
- Regional theme identifier
- Map of Montana showing entire journey
- Statewide story overview
- Regional map with Lewis and Clark route and 'You are here' locator
- Other regional Lewis and Clark opportunities
- Regional story summary



### Standardized signs are available

The National Park Service offers a standardized Lewis and Clark Orientation Panel that includes a map and basic history of the Expedition, which you might want to include in your project. The Park Service makes these signs available to agencies and organizations. Contact them in Great Falls at (406) 727-8733, ext. 311.

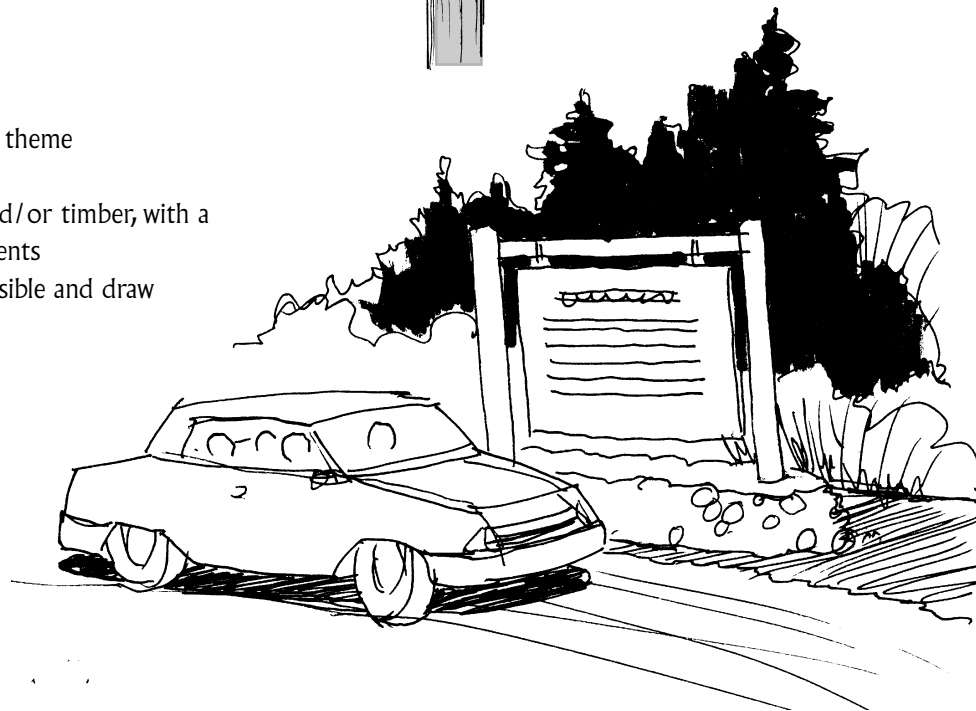
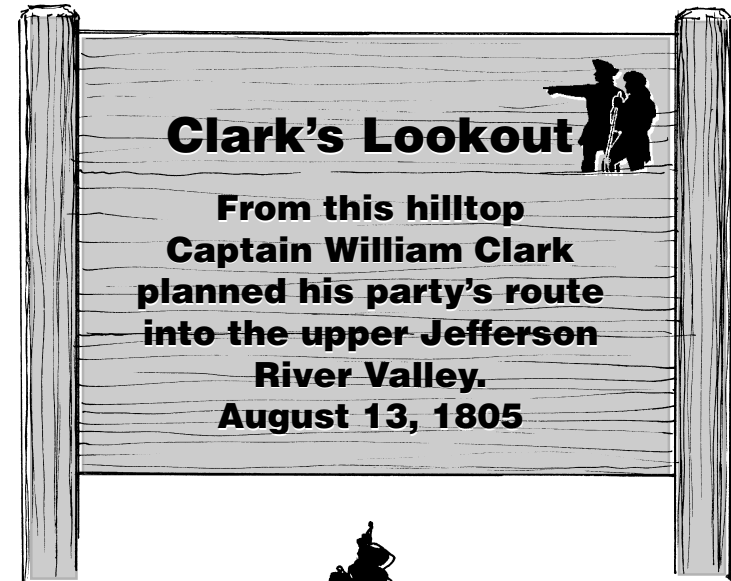


## Introduction Signs

Introduction signs draw visitors from a distance. Prominent and recognizable as cars approach, introduction signs provide a welcome and highly visible identification from a distance. The panel itself contains the name of the site and a brief description of the story at this site. These signs are mounted in a rustic base reminiscent of early Forest Service signage, constructed of oversized timbers with routed wood sign panels and placed in a setting that is landscaped with local rocks and vegetation. These panels are best used at recreation sites, at the entrance to trails and in parking areas adjacent to vista houses or recreational opportunities, or at the entrance to byways.

### ■ Elements of an Introduction Sign:

- Routed or painted panel
- Site name and short text with summary of site theme
- Lewis and Clark in Montana logo
- Supported within a rustic style base of rock and/or timber, with a hand-forged look to its iron hardware components
- Mounted high enough off the ground to be visible and draw attention from a vehicle.



### Markers

Markers simply identify. Low-impact site markers identify a special site with minimal impact to the setting. Markers are typically used as low-impact site identifiers at trailheads, where the focus is recreation. They are also used as high-profile identifiers at other facilities (rest areas or interpretive installations) in conjunction with other interpretation.

Simple, durable and low maintenance — they usually are cast in bronze or resin, or cut out of metal, and attached to a large stone — markers simply show the name of a place, or identify it as a Lewis and Clark site.

#### ■ Elements of the Marker:

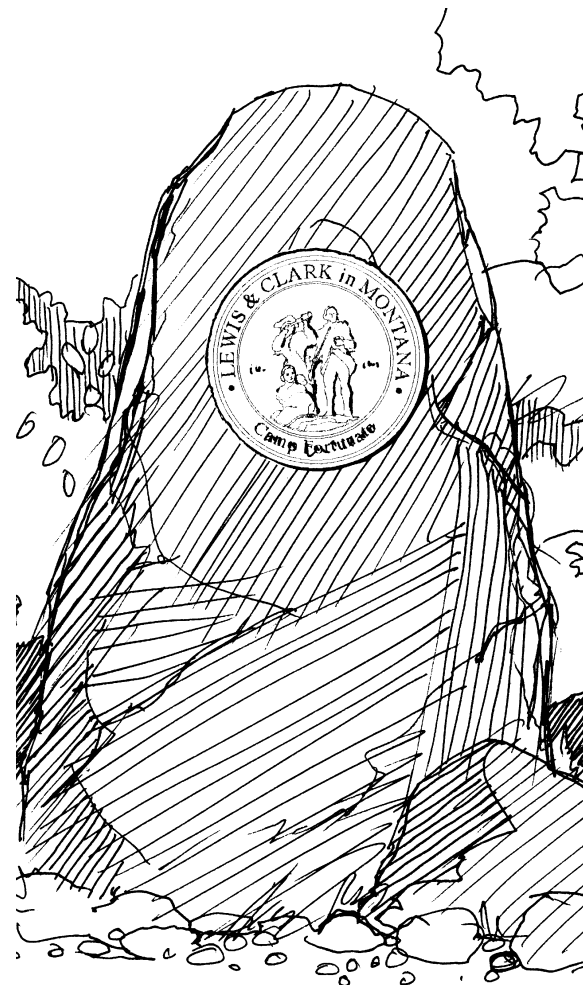
- Lewis and Clark logo
- Site name
- Constructed of metal (cast or cut-out)



Steel cut-out logo and site name mounted on rock



Cast bronze sculptural logo markers (could be used as a rubbing logo)



### Interpretive Signs

Interpretive signs reveal stories behind the landscape. Interpretive panels are most effectively used in places where the visitor is at leisure to appreciate an expanded view of the Lewis and Clark story. These signs can be used in conjunction with Introduction or Orientation panels. Interpretive signs combine provocative text with vivid graphics to tell a story and encourage the visitor to think about the natural surroundings and events that happened here.

Interpretive signs are rich in visual effects, blending color, text and artwork in a pleasing manner. Stories are enhanced with graphics, illustrations and maps. Sidebars often are used to tell a separate but related story, to ask questions, or to present additional information.



#### ■ Elements of the Interpretive Sign:

- Uses regional theme identifier and L&C logo
- May contain principle and secondary text and graphics
- Blends text and art to create visual interest
- May contain a map to locate you on the landscape and in the journey
- Mounted on a rustic style base of rock and/or timber
- Often used with an Introduction or Orientation sign

Interpretive signs include the most elements, and can be the most complex among the family of signs. The next few chapters will take you through the process of writing, designing and creating your interpretive signs.





## **Chapter One: Project Planning**

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## Chapter Two: Telling the story

*“The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.” — Freeman Tilden*

### See Lewis and Clark in the whole context

The Lewis and Clark story begins with the journals of the Expedition, but even more fascinating is a look at the bigger world they saw — and did not see. In developing your interpretive signs, look at the land, its natural history, and the people who lived here. Fill in the story the journals leave out: Whose abandoned camps did Lewis and Clark find, and why were they empty? What happened to all the bison they noted? What role did various local plants and animals play in early Plains cultures? What were Tribal names of places for which Lewis and Clark created new names?

You have an opportunity to tell more of the story than the Corps members ever could. You have many more resources at hand than they did. Use them to put visitors in the landscape with Lewis and Clark, and to expand visitors’ experience of the landscape beyond what Lewis and Clark were able to see and know.

■ To explore and prepare good interpretive text, here are the ingredients you’ll need:

- local oral histories
- historical narratives, journals, newspaper accounts, photos
- research into the natural history of your location (plants, animals, geologic formations, etc.)
- Tribal and political history of your area

### SOME STORIES THAT NEED TELLING:

Where were the people Lewis & Clark didn’t see in Eastern Montana?

- Influence of guns and horses on the 18th century tribal expansion
- Tribal trade routes used by Lewis and Clark
- Eastern tribes being displaced and moving onto the plains

What was the bigger political picture?

- Competition between the French and British fur trade
- US expansion, Manifest Destiny
- Active fur trade for over 60 years in Montana
- Well established fur trade under Canadian/British influence
- When Lewis & Clark left Eastern Montana they left the U.S.

Lewis and Clark were the first dinosaur hunters in Montana.

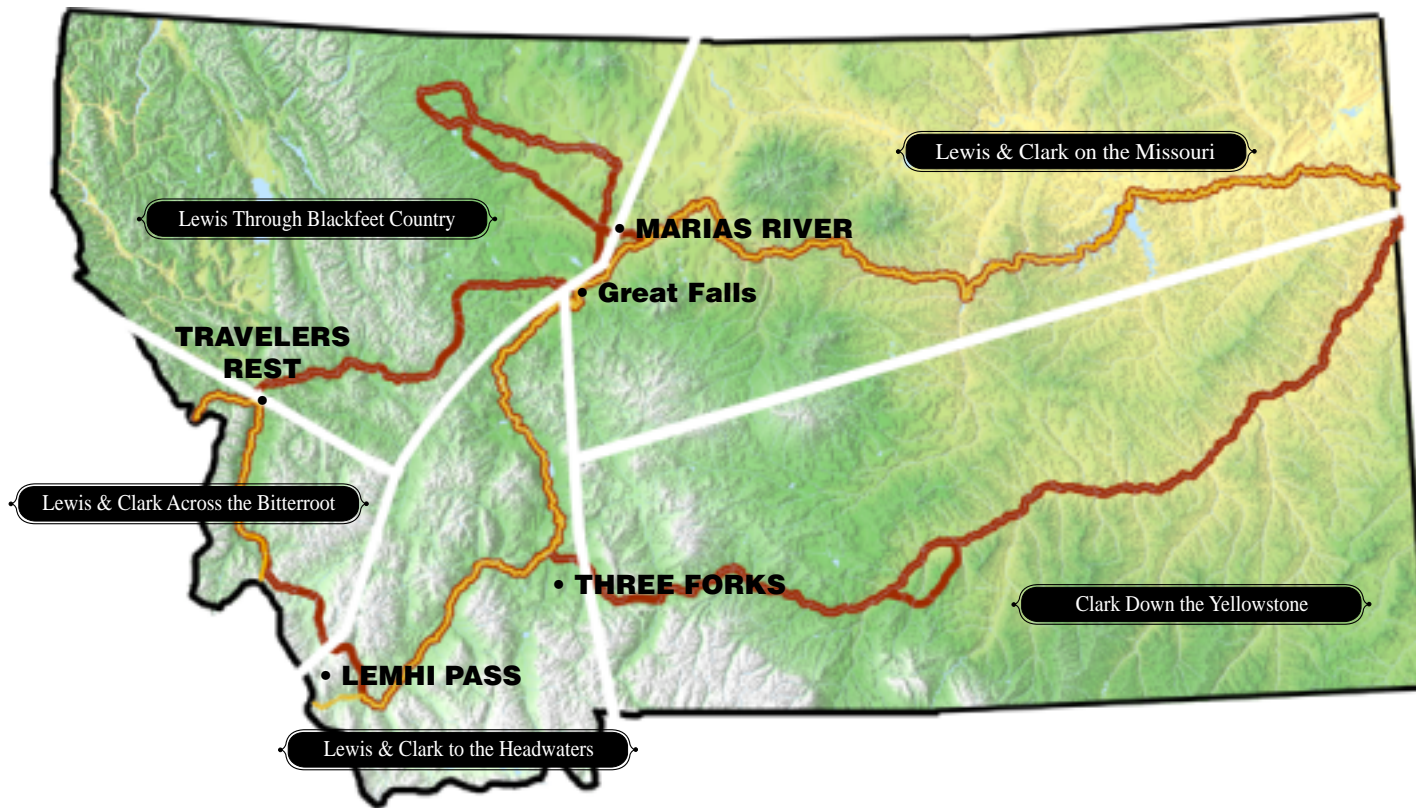
- Their documentation of the last of the Pleistocene megafauna: Bison, Plains Elk, Plains Sheep,
- Description of remnants of Pleistocene environment (grasslands)

The Expedition was a testing ground for new technology.

- Portable, collapsible raft (sank in the Missouri River)
- Air rifle

FOR MORE INFORMATION: For a plethora of potential story development ideas all along the Lewis and Clark trails, see Appendix IV.

**Lewis & Clark Regional Theme Identifiers**



### Developing the story line

Look for stories that haven't yet been told in interpretive signs. Even a well-known landmark, or an oft-retold episode in the journey, presents opportunities for revealing an unexpected twist, or highlighting an overlooked detail. The best interpretation prompts visitors to see the landscape in a new way, and to experience it more deeply, than they would if the sign were not there.

Here are a few guidelines to follow while developing your story line:

#### Use regional theme identifiers (see map at left).

Lewis and Clark's journeys across Montana can be divided into five regional theme identifiers:

- Lewis & Clark on the Missouri
- Lewis & Clark to the Headwaters
- Lewis & Clark through the Bitterroots
- Lewis in Blackfoot Country
- Clark down the Yellowstone

Like chapter headings, these five regional divisions help visitors identify where your sign fits in the overall story. Where in these

five themes does your story fit? The regional theme identifier should appear at the top of your sign (see Chapter Three for placement and format.)

#### Tell the story from the point of view of all cultures.

Much of the Lewis and Clark story is a tale of misunderstanding or ignorance of the cultures and languages of the people whose land they passed through. Tribal voices can provide clarification to events that puzzled and perplexed the Expedition. This critical tribal perspective can only come from the appropriate tribes themselves.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more information on tribal consultation and getting Native American input, see Appendix I.

### Make tribal contacts early

It is important to involve the local Indian tribes early on in your project. If you are not a member of a Montana Indian tribe, start with the contacts listed in Appendix I. These folks will be happy to help you, or can direct you to a tribal member who can provide more information:

Blackfeet  
Gros Ventre  
Salish  
Pend d' Oreille  
Crow  
Northern Cheyenne  
Assiniboine  
Kootenai  
Sioux  
Chippewa-Cree  
Shoshone (Idaho)  
Nez Perce (Idaho)

#### Relate the story to the land.

How did the land, the plants, the wildlife — the natural setting — contribute to the story you are telling?

### **Specify what to look for, and where.**

Don't just say, "In front of you lies..." in case the sign is installed at a different angle than you imagine. Say, rather, "Look to the north to see..." Always use directions, rather than simply "left" or "right."

### **Show, don't tell.**

Use art. Relief maps, photos, illustrations, and drawings can tell your story for you. Well done and wisely used, art doubles the impact of your story and reduces the words you need to use. Consider incorporating sculpture, audio messages, and pointing devices to involve more senses.

### **Make it sing**

Once you have developed your story idea, gathered your background information and talked to the sources you need, you're ready to write text for the sign. A few basic rules will help your text sing.

### **Develop a clear theme, and stick to it.**

The theme of your sign is simply the point or message you want to convey. "Lewis and Clark" is not a theme; it's a topic. "Chokecherry can

save your life" is a theme. Your headline should convey the theme in a brief, intriguing sentence. Interpretive signs usually contain only one or two main ideas and use maps, illustrations, photos, captions and inset text boxes to elaborate on those ideas.

### **Identify the results you want.**

After you have identified the theme of your signs, specify what you want your readers to know, feel and do after they have read them. Do you want them to know that Sacajewea was a critical member of the Expedition? Do you want them to feel the thrill and wonder an Expedition member felt? Do you want them to look for evidence of a certain geologic event? Make sure every sentence in your text sticks to the know/feel/do statement — the purpose of the sign.

### **Headlines tell the story.**

Some people read every word on every sign they see. Some read only the headlines and the subheads, and look at the pictures. Make sure your theme gets across, even to people who don't read the text, by telling the story in the heads and subheads, filling in details in the text. The graphic design can reinforce your theme.

### **Don't just inform — provoke.**

Good interpretive text uses a few words to draw readers in and provoke them to ask new questions. Rather than simply providing information, set readers up to draw their own conclusions, and leave them with ideas to ponder.

### **Engage the senses.**

Can visitors see or smell the same thing Lewis and Clark did? Can they picnic in the same spot, crest the same hill, or feel the same wind? Draw them in, don't just relate facts.

### **Use metaphors and comparisons.**

Metaphors are shortcuts to understanding. An accurate metaphor or comparison conveys your idea in very few words. It also helps place the reader right into a comparable situation.

### **Use active verbs; avoid adjectives.**

Fire up your text. Active verbs pack more power than strings of elegant, descriptive adjectives. Keep your story meaningful and personal; focus on what the reader needs to know, not necessarily what you like explaining. Try to relate your information to the personal experiences of your reader.

### **Simplify.**

Like poetry, interpretive text illuminates in as few words as possible. Rewrite, omit and focus. Don't try to tell too much. Have patience for the writing process; it sometimes takes many versions to draft the clearest paragraph.

### **Get help.**

Montana is home to a handful of expert interpretive writers. Ask the Montana Historical Society, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, or the National Park Service for good references. Or consult the National Association for Interpretation for members in your area.

### **Copyright considerations**

You can quote from a journal, book or other published work without asking permission as long as you cite the source (author and title) and your quote is 120 words or shorter. If for some reason you want to use a longer quote, you must obtain permission from the publisher.

If you use a direct quote from a journal of the Expedition, you should name the author

of the journal and the date of the entry. It is customary, when quoting from Lewis's journals, not to correct his inventive spelling, but to set the journal entry apart from the other sign text visually, so that it is easily identifiable as a journal entry.

Oral histories and Native American stories should be cited properly. If quoted from a book, credit the author, give the title of the book and the date it was published. If you use part of a traditional story that is given or told to you, be sure you get permission of the storyteller. Traditional stories are commonly cited using both Tribal identification and other descriptors and the name of the storyteller. (For example: Napi Story of the Blackfeet Nation, as told by \_\_\_\_\_.)

### **GOOD BOOKS TO HELP YOU WRITE**

**Environmental Interpretation.** Written by Sam Ham. Published by North America Press, Golden, CO. 1992.

**Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles.** Written by Larry Beck and Ted Cable. Published by Sagamore Publishing, Champaign, IL. 1997.

**Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources.** Written by Douglas Knudsen, Larry Beck and Ted Cable. Published by Venture Publishing, State College, PA. 1995.

**Interpreting Historic Sites.** Written by William T. Alderson and Shirley Payne Low. Published by the American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, TN. 1976.

**Interpreting Our Heritage.** Written by Freeman Tilden. Published by The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC. 1957.

**Interpretive Master Planning.** Written by John Ververka. Published by Falcon Publishing, Helena MT. 1993.

**Signs, Trails and Wayside Exhibits, Connecting People and Places.** (Interpreter's Handbook series). Written by Trapp, Gross and Zimmerman, Acorn Naturalists.

## Chapter Two: Telling The Story

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## Chapter Three: Designing the sign

*“Art should simplify. That is very nearly the whole of the higher artistic process; finding what conventions of form and what detail one can do without and yet preserve the spirit of the whole.”*

—Willa Cather

### Formats to follow

The MTRI team has developed four interpretive sign templates from which to choose when designing your sign. These templates specify color families, type fonts, a number of design elements, and several different layouts. You can use these templates to design your sign, or instruct your graphic designer to use them as a basic structure from which to build a similar, consistent-looking sign design that fits your specific needs.

The templates are included on the CD, in a PageMaker 6.5 file. These templates were inspired by our Montana heritage — vast landscapes of rich colors, abundant wildlife and a history of varied cultural traditions. The design principles are based on examples

found in Montana tourism posters and brochures of the Arts and Crafts style popular in the 1920s and 1930s. They also mirror some of Montana’s best rock and timber architecture, seen in the region’s national parks and national forests. Together the setting and structure of interpretive projects, the color palette, artwork and sign fonts should all work together to reflect the essence of Montana.

### About settings

#### Minimize impact to the setting.

Since interpretation rarely enhances the natural setting, it should be designed in a way that minimizes its impact. Use rocks and local vegetation to create a graceful transi-

tion between the interpretive installation and the surrounding landscape.

#### Reflect the natural shapes.

The shape of the structure should reflect the natural shapes of the surrounding area. Use informal arrangements of local rocks as sign mounts.

#### Place the interpretation in the landscape.

Signs set off, but still visible, from the amenities or parking lots help draw visitors out into the landscape.

#### Surprise subtly.

A plaque on the sidewalk, or a small obelisk can become a surprise element that provokes thought in what may be a mundane setting. Try to give visitors the sense of their own discovery.



### About structures

#### **Interpretive structures create context for the message.**

They should be built with native materials available at, or visible from, the site, and should blend with the surrounding landscape. Try to incorporate elements of craftsmanship contributed by local artists to enhance your new installation. For inspiration look to the Arts and Crafts school, which highlighted durable examples of fine, artistic craftsmanship with a timeless quality.

#### **Create for the future.**

Use stone, iron and wood to create durable, low-maintenance structures. Enhance your structure with details that exhibit craftsmanship and artistic interest. Sculpted sign frames also introduce another artistic element that can reinforce your message in a nonverbal way.

### Create a great sign

#### **Follow the templates.**

Many agencies have their own recommended guidelines to follow in developing their signs. Within the framework of your agency's

guidelines, try to incorporate as many of the template elements as possible. This way, everyone creating Lewis and Clark interpretation across Montana can effectively communicate a look that is readily identifiable as unique to the story of Lewis and Clark in Montana.

#### **A good layout is a map for the eye.**

Sign layout is critical to presenting information effectively. A good layout helps the eye find where to go next. It emphasizes the main points, highlights the most important elements, sets off secondary elements, and creates a path that guides the eye through all aspects of the sign.

#### **Fonts give the text a voice.**

Choice of typeface is as much an aesthetic design decision as the choice of art. Typesetting all Lewis and Clark interpretation in the same family of type fonts is one effective way to create visual cohesiveness among signs statewide. Please follow the type specifications incorporated into the templates provided in this chapter.

#### **Text is a graphic element.**

Use a variety of text weights, colors and background colors to add interest. Wrap

text around a graphic element to unify your layout. Odd or fancy type fonts are best for headlines. A simple, serif font is best for text. Generally, it is best to use no more than two fonts in one sign.

#### **Use a graphic designer.**

Even if you plan to design and produce the sign yourself, using the templates provided, it is usually a good idea to have a graphic designer produce the finished, camera-ready file. There are many subtleties of good design that the untrained eye can easily miss.

### Using color

Color sets the stage for your interpretive message. It can draw the viewer in and create mood for the story. Color is often undervalued in interpretive design, but it is a powerful tool. It can help indicate change of subject within a sign, highlight the importance of certain information, and help make text more readable.

Montana's landscape is rich in warm earth tones. Our recommended color palette features intense hues: Mediterranean yellow,

ochre red, rich earth brown, dark pine green, indigo blue. This same color family appears in 1920s Canadian Immigration posters, Railroad and other tourism posters from the early years of this century. They provide some good examples to illustrate the recommended look.

### **Color draws the eye.**

Consider your color choices carefully. What do you want to emphasize, and what should be in the background? Heavy color saturation makes a bold statement.

### **Header color should be the same as the Regional Theme Identifier text.**

(See “Color Guides to the Regional Theme Identifiers” Appendix V.)

### **Use background color.**

The background of the main body of text might differ from the background used behind a sidebar box. All backgrounds should be light in value, and should contrast greatly from type color for highest readability.

### **Refer to the PMS guide.**

Colors shown on your computer monitor or printer may not match the final printed

color, or anyone else’s computer monitor. Use this Strategy and the CD as a guideline, but be sure to use the PANTONE® Color Selector to accurately identify colors represented here.

## **Choosing art**

Artwork can be more effective than text in communicating a thought. Often a single image can effectively convey subtleties that would take many words to describe.

Historic artwork provides a window into the past. Maps and sketches from Lewis and Clark’s journals lend an air of authenticity to interpretation, and contribute an intimate, personal feel to the information.

No artist accompanied the Corps of Discovery’s advance through the West, but there are excellent examples from later in the period by artists who faithfully recorded nature and the landscape, lifestyles of people who lived on the Plains, and early exploration. Though you must adhere to copyright and reproduction restrictions when using most art works, the extra effort is often

worth it. These high quality visual elements enrich understanding in an elegant and timeless way.

### **Use art of high quality and enduring style.**

Historic documents, maps and art are an obvious first choice for illustrations. Avoid stylized, trendy illustrations; stick with enduring classics.

### **Add thematic graphic elements.**

You can add a multi-layered effect by using inset graphics, historic portraits, images of Expedition artifacts, and other graphic elements. Be sure they unify and highlight your story, and do not crowd the sign too much.

# Surprise Encounter



Lewis Through Blackfeet Country

This example of a 36" x 24" Lewis and Clark in Montana interpretive panel uses two alternative type fonts. The principle main text is set in 36 point Albertus regular and the title is set in 96 point Galahad bold. Although alternative fonts may be found for some panels they should be chosen carefully.

This example includes a sidebar with a graphic border containing sidebar information. Sidebars are a good tool to introduce different but related themes to an interpretive panel.

The header is an irregular torn header with the same effect used as a footer to contain agency logos and partnership information.



AGENCY LOGO



AGENCY LOGO

## Optional sidebar information

Sidebar text should be set in a sans serif font to give them a separate editorial voice. This example is set in 24 point Helvetica Regular with 26 points leading.

Since the entire sidebar for this example is 2 grid columns wide the text is set to fit comfortably within the box with at least 3 picas margin on the left side of the text.

## Secondary Headings

Sidebar headings and subtitles used here is set in 36 point Helvetica Bold and 24 point Helvetica Heavy to give them sufficient weight to set them apart from the text.



Caption: 24 point Times Roman

# Sandstone Citadels

“...Seens of Visionary enchantment...”



Lewis & Clark on the Missouri



View of the Stone Walls, Karl Bodmer

This is an example of a 36" x 24" Lewis and Clark in Montana interpretive panel. The principle main text is set in 36 point Century Schoolbook regular with 48 points leading for easier reading. Set flush left ragged right, 63 picas line length, it takes up 2 grid boxes each 30 picas wide with 3 pica space between each box.

The main title example above is set in 96 and 60 point Century Schoolbook bold and rests on the uppermost row of grid boxes. Each line of the heading is flush left of the first column providing ample room for the Lewis and Clark Regional Theme Identifier and logo on the left.



**AGENCY LOGO**



**AGENCY LOGO**

## Paddling through a Sea of Bison



Clark Down the Yellowstone

In this example the art takes nearly the entire interpretive display area giving this panel a singular focus. With only a portion of the artwork cut away for text and agency logos, a panel of this type requires forethought to how much information will be needed and where it shall be placed for the artist to know exactly how to create the illustration.

Main text is set in 36 point Times regular and the main title is set in 96 point Times bold. An initial 72 point cap is added at the beginning of the first line to give weight to the text and balance it in relationship to the large illustration.



AGENCY LOGO



AGENCY LOGO



## Meeting the Flatheads



Lewis & Clark Across the Bitterroots



*Lewis and Clark Meeting the Flatheads,*  
by Charles M. Russell

This is an example of a Lewis and Clark in Montana interpretive panel. The heading and principle main text is set in Bookman. The above header is an example of a straight header with a straight footer to accommodate several agency logos. Both are matching color, Pantone® 193.

The Russell painting of Lewis and Clark meeting the Flathead Indians at Ross Hole breaks slightly into the header area. Being carefully placed so as to not crowd the Regional Theme Identifier, this effect adds a dimensional quality to this interpretive panel.



AGENCY LOGO



AGENCY LOGO



AGENCY LOGO



AGENCY LOGO

### Lewis and Clark Interpretive Sign Graphics Template

#### Main Title Placement

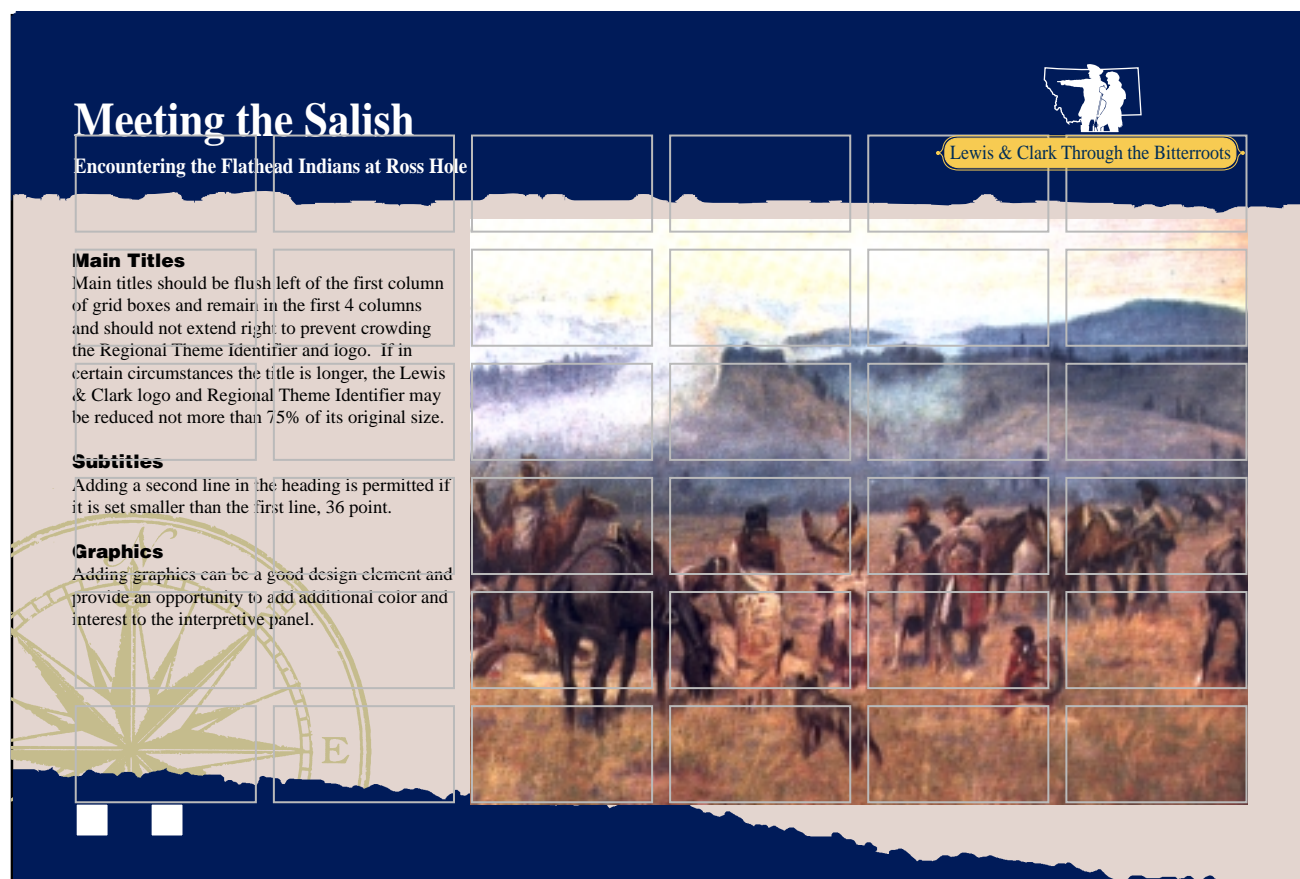
Main titles should be flush left of the first column of grid boxes and remain in the first 4 columns and should not extend right to prevent crowding the Regional Theme Identifier and logo. If in certain circumstances the title is longer, the Lewis & Clark logo and Regional Theme Identifier may be reduced not more than 75% of its original size. Adding a second line in the heading is permitted if it is set smaller than the first line, 36 point.

#### Agency Logo Placement:

Placement of Agency Logos and Administration Identifiers should be either in the bottom left or right hand corners of the interpretive sign panel.

#### Footers:

In some instances, footers may be used to better isolate Agency Logo and Partnership information. It is recommended that footers be the same style and color as the headers. They may



extend across the entire bottom of the panel or in the case of Irregular Torn, only partially. Footers should not be placed to extend above the last row of grid boxes.

**Header Colors:**

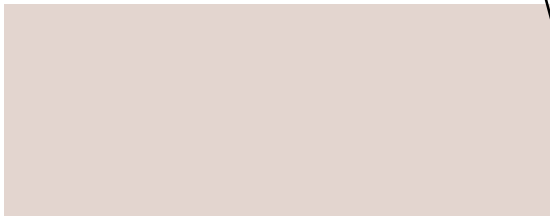
Forest Green (PMS 323)  
Indigo (PMS 541)  
Deep Red (PMS194)

Choose from 3 separate header colors to be used on your choice of headers styles.\*

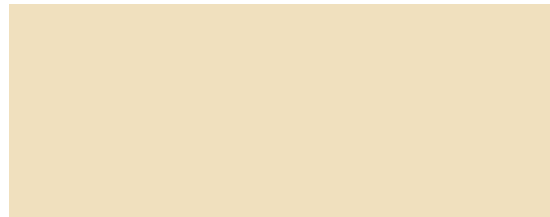
**Background Colors:**

Gray (PMS Warm Gray 1)  
Parchment (PMS 726)

Choose from 2 separate background colors.\*



Warm Gray



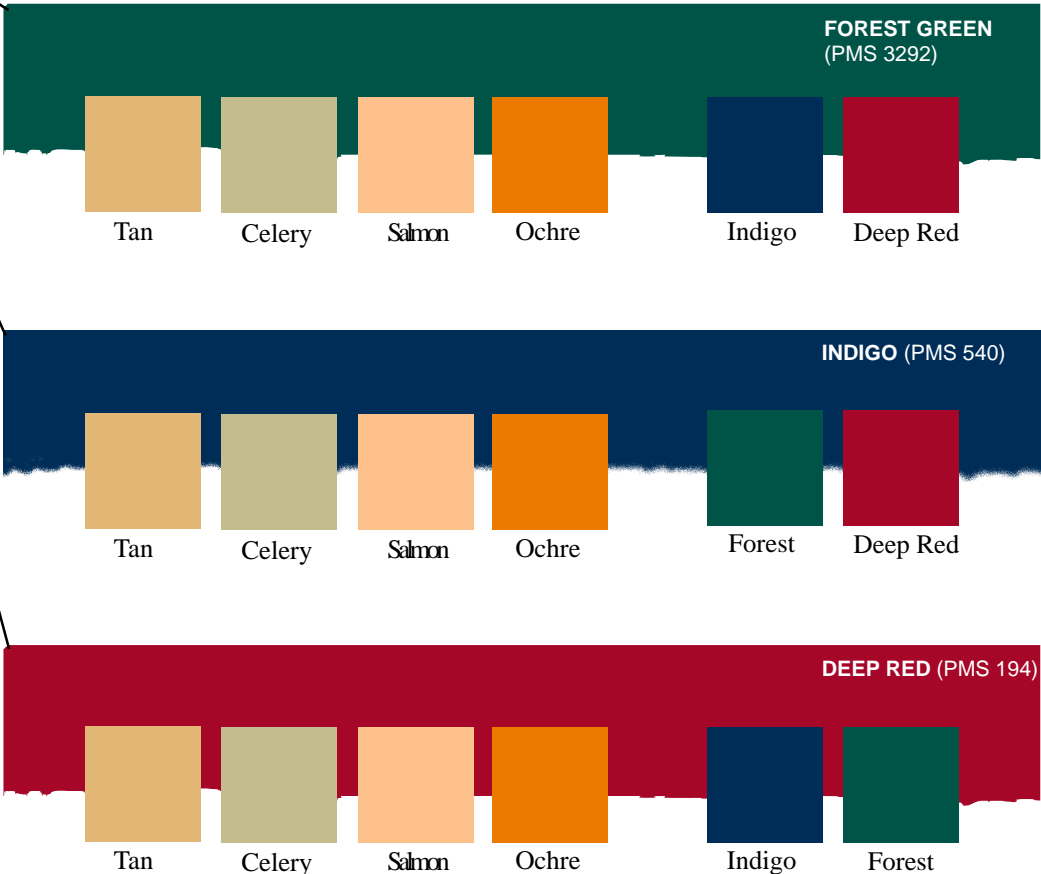
Parchment

**Secondary Color Scheme:**

Tan (PMS 728)  
Celery (PMS 452)  
Salmon (PMS 473)  
Ochre (PMS 145)

Secondary colors used as accent colors on graphics, borders and Regional Theme Identifiers

Choose from four secondary colors or use other header color options not chosen for header color\*



\* Colors presented on this and the following pages are not true PANTONE® MATCHING SYSTEM Colors. Consult a PANTONE® Color Selector for true color representation.



## Chapter Three: Designing the sign

### Fonts & Sizes: Main Title: 96 point

Helvetica, Bold or Black  
Times Roman, Bold  
Century Schoolbook, Bold  
Bookman, Bold  
Albertus, Bold (Alternative Font Style)  
Galahad, Bold (Alternative Font Style)

### Subtitle: 36 point

Helvetica, Bold or Black  
Times Roman, Bold  
Century Schoolbook, Bold  
Bookman, Bold  
Albertus, Bold (Alternative Font Style)

### Main text: 36 point

Helvetica, Regular,  
Times Roman, Regular  
Century Schoolbook, Regular  
Bookman, Regular  
Albertus, Regular (Alternative Font Style)

### Secondary Text: 24 point

Helvetica, Regular, Italic or Bold  
Times Roman, Regular, Italic or Bold  
Century Schoolbook, Regular, Italic or Bold  
Bookman, Regular, Italic or Bold  
Albertus, Regular, Italic or bold (Alternative Font Style)

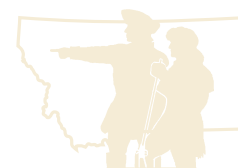
### Captions: 24 point

Helvetica, Regular or Italic  
Times Roman, Regular or Italic  
Century Schoolbook, Regular or Italic  
Bookman, Regular or Italic  
Albertus, Regular or Italic (Alternative Font Style)

### Lewis & Clark Logo:

The Lewis & Clark logo is positioned on the right side of the header centered over but not touching the Regional Theme Identifier. It may be white or tan (PMS 726) and should not exceed 3 inches wide.

Leave a small amount of space between it and the Theme Identifier.



Lewis & Clark to the Headwaters

### Regional Theme Identifier placement:

Placement of the Identifier should be standard for each interpretive sign panel.

The uppermost edge and the right side of the Identifier should fall within the upper right corner of the first row and sixth grid box column.



Lewis & Clark Across the Bitterroots



## Chapter Four: Completing the project

*“To the young mind everything is individual, stands by itself....*

*Later, remote things cohere and flower out from one stem.”*

— Emerson

### Hire locally

Begin by getting bids from a variety of people and companies in your area. The National Association for Interpretation can give you a listing of their members in and outside of Montana. Also, many of the agencies on the MTRI team know and have worked with writers, graphic designers and interpretive specialists they can recommend. Shop locally first — many Montana firms may be able to do the job. No matter whom you select, interview them first to determine that their area of expertise matches your project.

You might also want to consult your local sign maker, or several sign makers around the state. You can take them your written text, a copy of the templates to show them

the look you are after, and ask for their recommendations and cost estimates for producing a sign for your needs.

The process for producing indoor signage is different than for producing outdoor signs that must stand up to sun, weather, temperature changes, vandalism and harsh wear.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For a list of interpretive writers, designers and contractors who are members of the National Association for Interpretation, phone their office (970-484-8283) , or visit their website at [www.interpnet.com](http://www.interpnet.com).

Educate yourself about interpretive signs at the National Park Service's helpful Wayside exhibit website: [www.nps.gov/wayside](http://www.nps.gov/waysite).

There are companies across the country that specialize in producing outdoor interpretive signs. A local signmaker also might be able to hand-paint, stencil, silkscreen, carve or otherwise create a sign that fits your specifications and adheres to the overall look and consistency of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Strategy.

### Site preparation, installation and landscaping

Each site you work with will present different challenges, and each agency, community or group will handle them differently. In general, however, remember to use native vegetation in your landscaping plan, to minimize impact on the natural setting, to blend as much as possible with the natural

## Chapter Four: Completing the project

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landscape, and to draw people from their vehicles out into the natural world where your story can captivate them.

Supervision of the sign installation is essential to make sure they are oriented correctly. A sign facing the wrong way is ineffectual and frustrating to the visitor.

Remember that the job is not over once the sign is erected. Maintenance of the sign and its surroundings is an important, ongoing job and should be a part of your overall plan.

### Estimating the price tag

Every interpretive sign project will have its own set of costs for planning, sign design, fabrication, installation, and site development, but the following guidelines may be useful. You may want to use these as a starting point and get actual bids from contractors before applying for funding from grant sources. These cost estimates may also help you identify where in-kind contributions and partnering opportunities can help reduce your project budget.

Wherever your organization can handle tasks and expenses in-house, you can save on these estimated costs.

#### Planning:

Deciding where to place the sign(s), what story will be told, who needs to be involved, and what jobs will be contracted can be time consuming and may involve meetings with landowners and managers, tribes, government officials, and potential designers, writers, and illustrators. Even a simple project may require two to three weeks of several people's time.

If you hire a contractor to take on a large portion of the planning, expect to spend \$30 per hour or more. Budget \$2400 to \$3600, and adjust upwards for more complex projects.

#### Writing and design:

This portion of the budget includes writing text, laying out the sign(s), creating or finding appropriate artwork, and getting it all ready to send to the sign fabricator. Costs will vary greatly depending on the complexity and size of your project. Usually, designing several signs at once will save money because the designer can spread coordination and com-

munications over several signs and reduce the cost per sign. Expect to spend \$30 per hour or more, with a base budget of \$1200 to \$3600 per sign.

#### Fabricating signs:

Today, the choices of materials for interpretive signs abound, so plan to do a little research to determine which is best for your project. Fabrication costs for a 24" by 36" sign range from about \$400 to \$2,500 or higher. Relatively new processes to digitally print full-color images from computer files, such as fiberglass-embedded graphics and high-pressure laminates, will yield durable signs of reasonably high quality for less than \$500 per sign. Larger sizes will cost more. Older, more proven technologies, such as fiberglass-embedded screen printed signs, may cost about \$1,500 to \$2500. You can usually save money by ordering replacement signs along with your original order.

#### Building bases:

An attractive and durable frame/base for each sign is as important as the sign itself. The base should be sturdy, attractive and vandal-resistant, yet must allow for replacement. You can purchase standard metal bases

for a 24" by 36" interpretive sign for about \$600. Custom sign bases, using rustic stone walls, wood posts and forged iron, may vary quite a bit in cost, from slightly less than a metal base to significantly more. This is a good project to involve local craftsmen. To be safe, budget \$750 to \$1000.

### **Preparation and installation:**

Frequently overlooked as a cost item, site preparation and installation may require from one to several days per sign, especially if your sign must be transported to a remote location. Standard frames are generally set in concrete or mounted on a stone wall. Custom log and wrought iron bases may take longer. Budget about \$400 to \$600 per sign.

### **Site Development:**

Your project may include building or improving parking, restrooms, trails, exhibit shelters and vista houses, approach road signing, safety barriers and other improvements. Obviously, costs here will vary significantly but every site will require some level

of survey and site plan to determine needs.

Some typical costs:

- 200' paved 5' walkway \$1000
- asphalt parking for five cars \$1500
- placing 50 barrier rocks \$1000
- landscaping (planting 400 square feet) \$1000
- precast concrete toilet \$12,000
- 20' stone wall as sign base \$1200

It is essential to involve a skilled landscape architect, engineer or general contractor in planning and estimating these project costs.

Developing interpretive signs that are attractive, effective and durable involves a blend of skills and knowledge that few of us possess. Though they may have the basic skills, not every sign maker may have experience with outdoor interpretive signs. Consulting with sign professionals experienced in interpretive sign design may cost more up front, but will pay off in the long run.

## **Chapter Four: Completing the project**

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## Chapter Five: A checklist you can use

*“Most people comprehend history best when they participate actively — rather than just reading a sign. They need to walk the trail, smell the breeze, pick up and handle real artifacts, and closely examine site features. A battle comes to life when we stand where shots were fired. With a digging stick in our hands, we can appreciate how Shoshone women traditionally gathered roots. The real place, the real thing, stimulates our imaginations and makes us thirst to know more.”*

— Keith Thurlkill, U.S. Forest Service

This chapter provides you with a checklist for the entire process of producing interpretive signs, as outlined in the Interpretive Sign Strategy. It divides the process into stages, which correspond with each chapter of this workbook.

The following pages are formatted for you to photocopy and use.

### WHERE TO GO FOR GUIDANCE

If you have any questions, here are a few agencies to call for help:

National Park Service Interpretive Specialist (406) 727-8733, ext. 311

Montana Historical Society Sign Coordinator (406) 444-1687

U.S. Forest Service Interpretive Specialist (406) 329-3602

## Placing your story in the landscape

### General planning decisions:

While planning your project, you will need to determine the following:

- ☐ An appropriate spot to erect the sign
- ☐ A good story to tell (the theme of the sign or project)
- ☐ Permission from road management agency or landowner to put up the sign
- ☐ The primary audience
  - interstate travelers
  - excursion travelers
  - Lewis and Clark enthusiasts
  - recreational visitors
- ☐ The best type of interpretive installation
  - interpretive sign
  - orientation sign
  - introductory panel
  - marker
  - vista house
- ☐ Additional infrastructure requirements
  - adequate parking or pullout area
  - landscaping plan that uses native vegetation
  - all structures using well crafted stone, timber and iron
- ☐ A good team to put it all together
  - a writer
  - a graphic designer
  - someone to build the structure
  - someone to install the finished signs
  - a small group of people to contribute help and ideas
  - local community groups to contribute artisan skills
  - a team leader to administer the project

## Improving Montana's Lewis and Clark interpretation

In your planning, please think about the suggested ways to improve Montana's Lewis and Clark interpretation. Four specific suggestions are:

- ☐ Emphasize the Native American point of view
- ☐ Highlight expansive landscapes that still look like they did when Lewis and Clark first saw them
- ☐ Coordinate your sign with other Lewis and Clark interpretation in your region
- ☐ Orient the traveler in the landscape

## Telling the story

### Preparing and researching the story

Appendix IV offers suggestions for story ideas to develop in your interpretation. Even if you already have your story idea, consult this resource for ways to expand, focus or add to your sign content. Other resources:

- ☐ Local oral histories
- ☐ Tribal histories and stories
- ☐ Historical narratives, journals, newspaper accounts
- ☐ Photos, drawings, illustrations
- ☐ Natural history information

### Refining the story

- ☐ Select your regional identifier
- ☐ Tell the story from the point of view of all cultures
- ☐ Get tribal input (See Appendix I)
- ☐ Relate the story to the land

### Writing the story

- ☐ Identify a clear theme and stick to it
- ☐ Develop a clear know/feel/do statement
- ☐ Headlines should tell the story
- ☐ Use active verbs; avoid adjectives
- ☐ Make sure text specifies what to look for and where (use compass directions)
- ☐ Engage all five senses as much as possible
- ☐ Hire a professional writer to help

### Copyrights and credits

- ☐ Have you quoted other sources directly?
- ☐ Cite author, title of publication and date of publication
- ☐ If quotes exceed 120 words, get written permission from copyright owner
- ☐ Get tribal permission for Native American oral histories

## Designing the sign

### Designing for the natural setting

- ☐ Make sure sign will minimize impact to the natural setting
- ☐ Does design reflect the natural setting in shape, structure and materials?
- ☐ Does the placement of the sign draw people into the landscape?
- ☐ Does the interpretive structure create a good context for the message?
- ☐ Use durable, high-quality, natural materials
- ☐ Landscape with native vegetation from that locale

### General design considerations

- ☐ Choose one of the four templates provided
- ☐ Include the regional identifier
- ☐ Include the Lewis and Clark logo
- ☐ Follow the type font specifications
- ☐ Choose from the selected family of colors
- ☐ Put agency logos, artist permissions, and other information in a consistent space at the bottom of the sign

### Using art

- ☐ Select high-quality art of enduring style
- ☐ Use thematic graphic elements where possible
- ☐ Coordinate use of art on your sign with other interpretive signs across the state to minimize duplication
- ☐ Consult a professional graphic designer





## **Producing the sign**

### **Getting bids**

- ☐ Check with local sign makers
- ☐ Interview several interpretive specialists
- ☐ Visit web sites to get more information

### **Items to budget for**

- ☐ Site preparation and landscaping
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Writing and design
- ☐ Fabricating signs
- ☐ Building or fabricating bases
- ☐ Installation
- ☐ Site development and improvements
- ☐ Long-term maintenance

### **Things to check for**

- ☐ Are you working with contractors experienced in projects like yours?
- ☐ Are there aspects of the sign (views, orientations) that affect how or where the sign should be installed?
- ☐ How much of the work can local craftsmen do?
- ☐ What in-kind contributions and partnering can be done on this project?